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HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

JULY 1997

JULY HAPPENINGS

The July luncheon meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at 12 noon on Thursday, July 17 at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

We are pleased to welcome Tim Kellar, Clerk of Chancery Court as our speaker. He will tell us about the wills, deeds and other historical records in his office and how we can use them.

Please call 467-4090 for luncheon reservations. Cost is \$6.00. Please make your reservations early.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The first meeting of the Bienville Statue Committee met on June 17 at the Kate Lobrano House.

The committee is composed of Charles Gray of the Historical Society, Jerry Heitzmann of the Hancock Bank, Buzz Olsen of the City of Bay Saint Louis, Donna Davis of the Downtown Merchant's Association and Cindy Vernon of the Chamber of Commerce.

The committee made the following recommendations to the City of Bay Saint Louis:

1. That a life-size statue of Jean Pierre LeMoyné, Sieur d'Bienville be constructed and presented at the Tercentennary Celebration in 1999.

2. That Mary Davidson be commissioned to execute the statue.

3. That Kevin Fitzpatrick, architect be commissioned to design the pedestal and surrounding area for the statue.

(Continued on page 3)



Many immigrants came by flatboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers

Photograph from *Our Mississippi* by Pearl Vivian Guyton

THE BRITISH PERIOD 1763-1779

England's defeat of France in the Seven Years' War brought an end to French rule in North America. As a result of the peace treaty signed by George III and France in 1763, the Gulf Coast became a part of the newly-created province of British West Florida. The Fleur de Lis was lowered and replaced by the flag of the British empire. The first governor by royal appointment was George Johnstone.

Governor Johnstone, a Scotchman by birth and a distinguished naval officer

by achievement, arrived at Pensacola in 1764 and sent garrisons to Fort Conde at Mobile which he called Fort Charlotte after the queen; to Manchac, which was called Fort Bute; and to Fort Rosalie at Natchez. He appointed civil magistrates and organized a superior court at Pensacola, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole province. It administered justice under the common law of England.

One would think that was sufficient explanation of how present-day Mississippi developed its English language and traditional English customs. Nay!

The language of the people was French with Spanish being second. English was not used between the Pearl River and the Perdido until after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Governor Johnstone's extensive plans for the territory were never very effective. He did, however, begin the practice of giving out large tracts of land to former soldiers and settlers. While this was an excellent device to attract settlers to the territory, Governor Johnstone was a harsh man and became so unpopular with the people that he was forced to resign in 1768.

Even after three quarters of a century, the number of Europeans along the coast were few and those were widely scattered. There were but 48 families, about 20 of whom lived along the east bank of the Pearl River in the Pearlington, Gainesville and Logtown region. There were about 10 families at Bay Saint Louis and 12 families at Biloxi Bay. Most of those had been driven off Cat Island in the hurricane of 1772. They consisted largely of people named Cuevas and Ladner, no matter how you spell it. There were 6 families on the Pascagoula River.

In fact, there were only about 1200 Europeans in the whole territory from Lake Pontchartrain's most westerly side to east of Pensacola in present day Florida. There were 6 families on the north side of Lake Pontchartrain.

Coastal people, speaking mostly French, had little interest in the arrival of the British. Reading and writing were relatively unknown as there were not enough people congregated in communities to warrant church buildings or school houses with teachers. Life was simple, though perhaps difficult.

After Bienville moved the seat of government to New Orleans in 1723, ships from Europe sailed around the Chandeleur Islands to the south of the Mississippi Coast as there was little of commercial value to be traded with the local people.

Politics definitely did not concern the residents so when control was switched after 64 years of French rule, the British directives had little actual effect on them,

though Spanish money was recognized as good since it was in hard coins.

Local people did not dress with any concern for style. A Mr. Romans who traveled through the area in the 1770's later wrote that they did not wear shoes except in winter and then only Indian style moccasins, leggings or boots. They made their own cloth and dressed neatly in the style of fishermen and hunters, which they were.

The men wore cotton trousers and no-sleeve shirts without coats. If it was cold a short cover type vest was worn or in extreme cold, a blanket. Women were similarly neatly but simply clad as the climate permitted usually in cloth dresses woven locally.

Their manners and conversation was reported as being easy, moral and entertaining.

These people were the descendants of the original settlers of 1699 to 1725, many of whom with Indian inclusion, since emigration to the area had been very small.

All writers reported them as industrious and happy people content with their lot.

Agriculturally they raised corn, indigo, potatoes, beans, peas, cotton, tobacco, plus fruits such as pears, peaches, grapes, and plums. Poultry and eggs as well as herds of "black cattle" were reported around Mobile and Biloxi. The tar which they produced from trees was under British government control so they smuggled it across Lake Pontchartrain to New Orleans where there was a ready market. Skins from the cattle or from deer and other pelts were among the few marketable items that the settlers had for trading.

Without barbers or hairdressers or even mirrors for that matter, long hair was apparently the custom but with a head band to keep it from interfering with their vigorous labor when swinging an ax, building boats, hunting, fishing, cooking, milking cows, gathering pitch and turpentine, etc.

Since neither school nor church building existed, social gatherings were usually held in taverns and alcoholic beverages were consumed. Any decisions

made, if remembered, were never recorded.

Travel along the coast has traditionally been "along the coast", that is in an east-west direction between Pensacola and New Orleans. It was difficult to go north through the dense piney woods, crossing innumerable streams, and there were few reliable trails.

Also, trade and economic benefits for the coast's lumber, tar, charcoal, hides, pelts, cattle, and seafood lay exclusively in the large city of New Orleans, and to a lesser degree, Mobile. There were no communications north and south such as mail, telegraph, or travel except by streams such as the Pascagoula, Pearl and smaller rivers leading into the Bay of Saint Louis or Biloxi bays. These comparatively shallow waterways were good for rafting down the high water but difficult to canoe up.

The settlers to the north of the coast, were mostly English-speaking and were from the Atlantic colony area. They were seeking British land grants to escape the coming turmoil they could foresee in the Revolution. As farmers of English-Irish-Scotch ancestry they also wanted good farm land which was mainly up the Mississippi River on the high bluffs in the Natchez region. Also most of these people came down-river via the Cumberland or Ohio and Mississippi rather than by sea, so few were interested in the barren pine-covered sandy soil of the Mississippi coastal region.

After Governor Johnston resigned in 1768, he was followed by Governor Montford Browne who abandoned his position in 1770. He was followed by Governor Peter Chester who did not call a meeting of the Assembly (a governing committee selected from among the settlers) during his first six years in office. Finally called, the Assembly argued for 34 days accomplishing nothing. They disbanded and never met again.

The Second Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War and England was forced to surrender both East and West Florida to Spain thus ending a relatively dormant period in the history of the Gulf Coast.

Charles H. Gray

(President from page 1)

4. That the City accept the generous offer of Mr. Leo Seal and the Hancock Bank to have the statue placed in the park on South Beach Boulevard next to the Bank.

5. That the City accept Mr. Seal's offer to share the cost of the statue.

6. That a time capsule be placed in the pedestal to be opened on August 25, 2099.

7. Commemorative bricks bearing family names etc. with up to 3 lines will be sold at \$50 each. They will be used around the statue.

Other matters were discussed and will be published when action is to be taken on them.

Charles H. Gray

DR. KOTZ ALLEN IDENTIFIED

We certainly struck gold with our inquiry placed on the photograph from our collection of unidentified houses. The photograph which was provided to us by Mary Perkins came originally from the Perkins Real Estate Company and was identified only by an ink notation which read, "Dr. Kotz Allen". We published the photo and an inquiry last month.

The first call was from Mary McDonald Winnard which was followed quickly by a visit from Larry Larroux. We even received a letter from Robert Scharff in Charlotte, North Carolina.

We are now well informed that Dr. Kotz Allen was a New Orleans physician who "specialized in tonsil removing". Dr. Allen came on a regular basis to Bay Saint Louis and maintained an office diagonally from McDonald Hardware in the house on the north west corner of Toulme and Estabrook streets.

Mrs. Winnard says that appointments were made in advance and children were brought, sometime whole families at a time, in the early morning and that the operations were performed in rapid succession, one after another until all were done.

The children remained at the clinic for the rest of the day and usually were allowed to go home in the evening. She remembers that they were allowed ice

cream, it being a soft food that would not endanger the wound.

Mr. Larroux remembers the nurse named Annie and her caring for the children.

Thank you, contributors. Now see what you can tell me about today's photo. We don't have a clue except that it appears to be a beachfront home, either Bay Saint Louis or Waveland. It is an unusual house so peruse it carefully.

BOOKS DONATED

One who has brought us many great gifts in the past, Jerry Heitzmann, has donated a copy of *Mississippi As a Province, Territory and State* by J.F.H. Claiborne to the society. This is an excellent reference book about the state. Mr. Claiborne was a tireless researcher. He was the son of General F. L. Claiborne, commander of the Mississippi Volunteers in the War of 1812. His uncle, W.C.C. Claiborne, served as governor of the Mississippi Territory from 1801 to 1805. Mr. Claiborne himself served in Congress. Thank you, Jerry.

Kathleen Kemp, another member who has made many donations in the past donated a delightful children's book, *Everywhere in Mississippi* by Laurie Parker. It is the tale of a lost puppy whose master conducted a state-wide search for him, weaving over 300 Mississippi towns and communities into alliterations and rhyme. Thank you Kathleen.



Arvine Garcia donated a rare book indeed to our collection. It is the ledger from the Engman's Enterprise Grocery and Drygoods Store which was located at 220 Bookter. It is dated 1911. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

SUNDAY "ECHO" HELPFUL

The Sea Coast Echo, which has always been very supportive of the Historical Society, published a long, front-page article in its July 6th edition. The article by Betsy Gagnet described in detail the operation and goals of the Society and we have had numerous phone calls and visits prompted by the article. We hope to get some new volunteers to work at the Loblano house from this publicity. Please come by for an hour or two a week if you have time. We need you.

NEW MEMBERS

Tom Wall, Waveland
Paul Betty, Waveland
Bob Perrin, Bay Saint Louis
Mary Perrin, Bay Saint Louis
Marlene Bell, Salado, Texas
Harlie Lee, North Hancock County
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Jacqueline Yarrington, Bay Saint Louis
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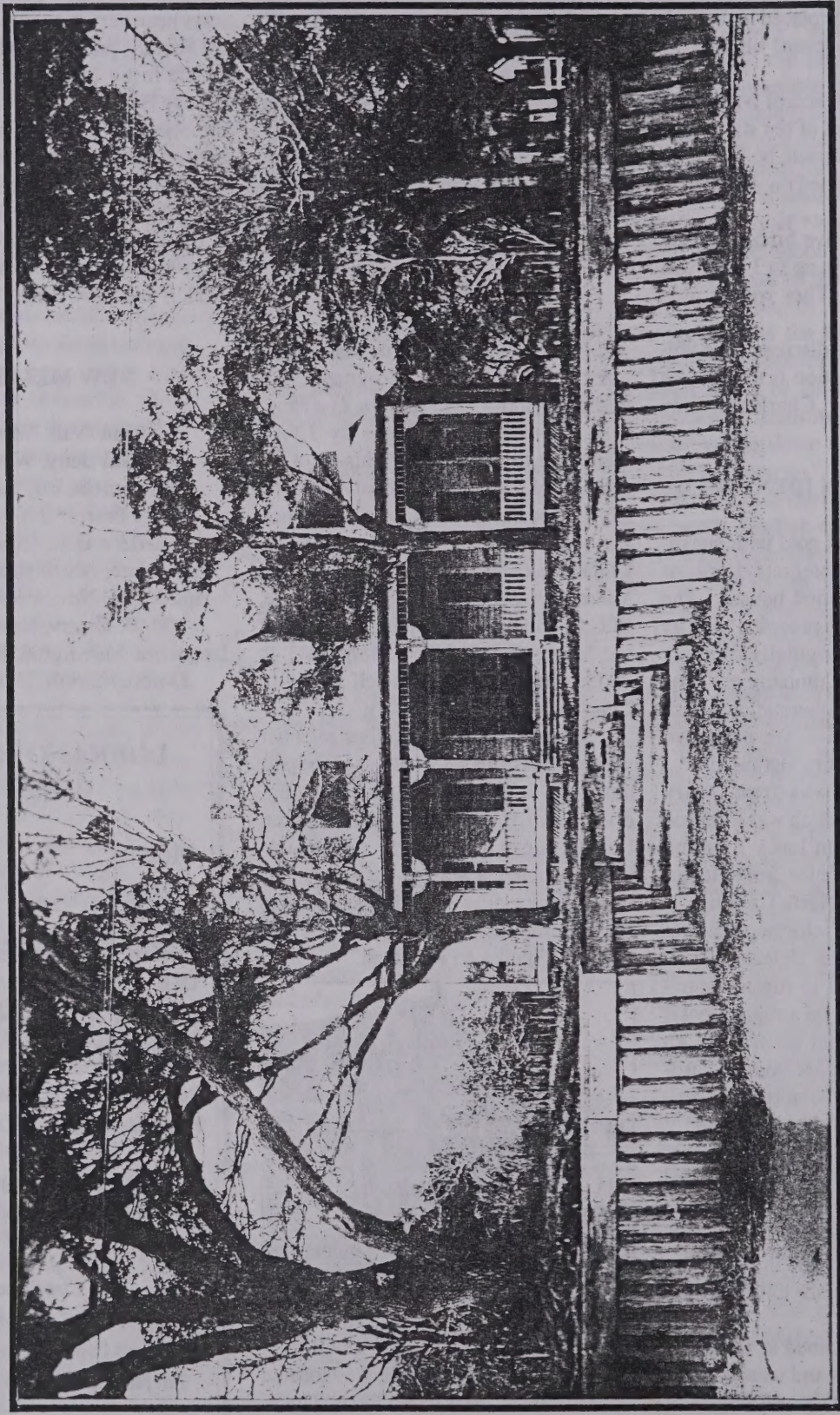
Monday	8 a.m.
through	to
Friday	4 p.m.

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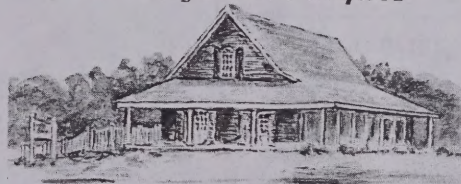
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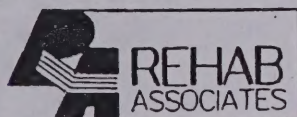


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